

A New Look at Job Descriptions

Think about this. You asked for a cell phone for a gift. In your mind you are thinking about a phone you can use to make and receive calls, text your friends or connect to the Internet. You receive the phone, and it is just that – a phone you can use to make and receive calls! Nothing more!

Your expectations for a job may lead to a similar disappointment unless you are able to clarify what you think you are going to do. A good place to learn what you are expected to do is in a well-written job description. Even then, a prospective employer may tell you what you will do, but not what you need to do to keep the job.

A results-oriented job description will be more helpful to you than the traditional list of tasks and duties. If you read that the posted job requires an employee to respond to customers' questions by email or telephone, you know that an applicant should have good keyboarding and communication skills. You also know that if you don't want customer contact, this job is probably not for you.

Take a closer look at these results-oriented descriptions so that you can identify the skills an applicant should bring to the job:

- Use ultrasound equipment to perform carotid artery studies.
- Come with a proven track record in designing user-friendly Web pages.
- Collect and analyze water samples from surface and groundwater sources. Report results in written documents. Be prepared to explain those results to a nonscientific audience.
- Identify equipment required for an electrical power system, including motors and software required to support the system. Write a comparative analysis of the options you consider, including reasons for the choices you make.
- Conduct internal investigations to evaluate workers' compensation claims.

Match each description with a proficiency knowledge or skill requirement.

1. Understand how to read electrical equipment specifications.
2. Have a working knowledge of human anatomy.
3. Have graphic design experience.
4. Have knowledge of employment law.
5. Pay attention to detail when measuring quantities.

As you prepare for an interview, read the job description carefully. If the description lists knowledge and skill requirements, prepare questions that will help you learn more about what you would actually be doing.

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Formulate a question for each of the following requirements taken from more traditional job descriptions.

- Computer literate
- Work directly with suppliers
- Love finance, numbers and the sales cycle
- Develop and implement support services for employees